

# *The American Jew*

A STUDY OF BACKGROUNDS

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*Abraham J. Feldman*

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The American Jew

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# THE AMERICAN JEW

*A Study of Backgrounds*



# THE AMERICAN JEW

*A Study of Backgrounds.*

BY

RABBI ABRAHAM J. FELDMAN



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"And they said every one to his fellow: 'Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him: 'Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us: what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?' And he said unto them: 'I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who hath made the sea and the dry land.' "

*Jonah I:7-9*

"The Jew recognises practically, if not consciously, that he is made what he is by the history of his fathers, and feels he is losing his better self so far as he loses his hold of his past history; for he regards himself as having gone through the vicissitudes of his fathers."

JOSEPH JACOBS: *Jewish Ideals*, p. 16, 1896.



## PREFACE

THE contents of this book has been used by the author in various ways. He used it for lectures and he used it as a syllabus in classes. In the latter case he found it particularly useful, because while the text tells a story, the teacher and students had ample opportunity to go into the many by-paths suggested by names, incidents, movements. These were made the subjects of studies and reports by individual members of the class and made for very stimulating discussions.

The appended reading lists are not exhaustive, of course; they are intended to be helpfully suggestive. The chronological tables have a similar purpose.

It will be found that this text could be most useful for classes composed of High School youth as also for adult study groups.

The author acknowledges his indebtedness to Harriet B. Schoenfeld of Hartford for several constructive suggestions made by her, suggestions born of the practical experience she had with this text in a High School class of the Beth Israel Religious School.

The book is sent forth with the fervent hope that

it may make for the further integration of American Jewry; that it may help level such remaining barriers as there are; that it may make for a deepening respect for, and understanding among, brethren; and that even the stranger who is not of the household of Israel who may perchance read these pages may learn to know that the American Jew is the

“Heir of all that they have earned  
By their passion and their tears;  
Heir of all that they have learned  
Through the weary, toiling years.

“Heir of all the faith sublime  
On whose wings they soared to heaven;  
Heir of every hope that time  
To earth’s fainting sons hath given.”

ABRAHAM J. FELDMAN

*Hartford, Connecticut*  
*Erev Shabbath Nachamu—5697*  
*July 23, 1937*

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# THE AMERICAN JEW

*A Study of Backgrounds*



## CHAPTER I

### THE BACKGROUND OF THE SPANISH- PORTUGUESE JEWS IN AMERICA

SOME years ago the then editor of the *World's Work* magazine wrote a series of articles which later appeared in a book entitled "The Jews in America."

In those articles whenever the editor mentioned the *American* Jew he referred specifically to the *German* Jew who settled in America, and his descendants. To the rights and perquisites of the distinguished degree of "American Jew," that editor did not admit the Russian and Polish Jews.

Now, there are many others, even *Jews*, who, like that editor, seem to distinguish between the "American" Jew and other Jews in America. An "American" Jew, to such people, is not one of the more recent immigration, and even a native-born son of such an immigrant is not considered an "American" Jew. In the judgment of these folk, complete Americanization, American education, business achievement, social milieu, do not necessarily make an "American" Jew. The designation "American Jew" they apply almost exclusively to the Jew who either

himself came over from Germany or is a descendant of that stock.

That such a view is entirely erroneous is, of course, conceded by anyone who thinks and knows aught of Jewish life and of American tradition.

But is there an "American Jew"? Who is such a Jew? How did he become such?

It is to the consideration of this matter that the author devotes these pages. And he deemed it wisest and most accurate to approach his theme by way of an examination of the background of the Jews in America, more especially of those major groups which at various periods in America's history have sent their hundreds and their thousands to "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

We should realize that the American Jew was not created *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. He is "like a tree planted by streams of water," his roots are in the deep soil of Jewish and human history, and his coming here was a transplanting into a rich and fruitful soil. To know the American Jew, therefore, to know who he is, and what he is, we must know his antecedents, the sources whence he came; we must understand his background. And so, in accordance with accepted laboratory methods, we shall separate the body before us into its constituent parts, analyze these parts, and when the analysis is complete, we

shall again fuse these constituents into an organic whole.

We know that American Jewry falls into three major groupings, according to place of origin and time of arrival. For there were three large Jewish migrations to America. The first, and the smallest, was the migration of the Spanish-Portuguese Jews, the Sephardim. Later came a larger migration of German Jews. The third and largest migration came from eastern and southeastern Europe and was composed of the Russian, Polish and Galician Jews.

In this chapter, we address ourselves to a study of the background of the first group. Before doing so, however, an additional word should be said by way of introduction. A people, a group, any people, any group, has an inherent right, when it is being judged, to be judged by its best and not by its worst characteristics. Recognizing that the doctrine of total depravity is as un-Jewish as it is untrue, and realizing that no group could possibly survive, as the Jews have survived, except as it is predominantly wholesome, we are justified to seek the good, the true, the lasting, rather than the abnormal, the perverted, or the decadent. None will disagree with us when we say that in judging America and Americans the criterion of judgment ought not to be Ku Klux Klansmen, racketeers, gangsters, bootleggers, or even the average politician. Rather, America should be judged by its Wilsons, its Eliots, its Roosevelts.

So, too, should we judge Jewry, and it is with this attitude that we approach the study of the various groups that comprise the Jews of America.

The Sephardic Jew, then, was the first Jew to come to America. What was his background?

There were Jews in Spain even in pre-Christian times. The Apostle Paul certainly intended to go to Spain to proclaim the gospel to Jews there (Romans XV:24, 28). The Talmud and the Midrash refer to "Aspamya," which is the old name for Spain; Jewish coins have been found in Spain, as well as Jewish tombstones which date to the third century.

From the third century on, it seems that Jews spread rapidly over the entire Pyrennean peninsula, and in those early days, under the Arian Visigoths, the Jews were well treated. Then at the beginning of the fourth century, about 303 and 304, at the time of the Church Council of Elvira, anti-Jewish legislation in the peninsula began to multiply and conditions continued to grow worse until, at the Third Council of Toledo in 589, King Reccared I was converted to Catholicism which became the official State religion. There began a series of bitter and stringent persecutions. Intermarriages were forbidden. Segregation of the Jews was enforced. There were forced conversions. There was confiscation of Jewish property. There was exile. Even slavery.

This continued until the eighth century when, in

711, the Moors took possession of the peninsula. These Arab invaders removed the disabilities against the Jews for whom a new era was thus ushered in. This was the period which came to be known as the Golden Age in Jewish History, and it continued from the eighth through to the eleventh centuries, or the year 1013, when the Moslem power over Spain was broken and the Moslem liberal spirit disintegrated.

The country was partitioned into a number of small kingdoms under separate caliphs. Jewish fortunes likewise were varied. In some of the districts Jews were treated with continuing kindness. Elsewhere in Spain there was discrimination against them. Their fortunes and advantages changed with the political complexions of sovereigns. Under the Almoravides, a Berber tribe but lately converted to Islam, warlike, fanatical, the Jews fared poorly. These Berbers lasted in Spain but a short while, 1086 to 1146, and were displaced by the Almohades, who also were Moslems. These subjected the Jews to a series of terrible persecutions lasting until 1212 when their power was finally broken by Christian princes.

But the lot of the Jews was not improved. With the beginning of the Christian reign in Spain these persecutions continued and became ever more serious. It was during the Christian reign that the "Badge of Shame" was introduced. It was during

this period that confiscation of Jewish property was the rule. It was during this period that unspeakable massacres, such as those of 1366 and 1391, took place. It was during this time that forced conversions multiplied, resulting in that class of the Jewish disinherited known as Maranos, they who formally accepted Catholicism but secretly practiced Judaism.

It was during this period of the Christian dominion in Spain that we observe the rise of "disputations," the formal and forced debates between spokesmen for the Jews and spokesmen for the Church as to the relative merits of the respective religions. These disputations were not intended to do the Jews any good. They were not "good-will" meetings, in any sense. The intention of these disputations, sponsored by the Church, was admittedly to embarrass the Jews by inflaming the populace against them.

It was during this period that there were the constantly increasing numbers of restrictions against the Jews. With but very little surcease now and then, it is a story of constant persecution until, in 1492, under the influence of Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor in Spain, the Jews were compelled to leave the country or cease to be Jews. Here we have the end of the chapter as far as Jewry in Spain is concerned.

Now, as we read this very sketchy and most superficial account of Jewish fortunes in Spain, we be-

come aware that their story is not unlike the story with which we are familiar—the story of Jewry throughout the Middle Ages in Europe. But we might ask, is this the background of the Sephardic Jew? Are the black of persecution and the red of massacre the only colors in the background against which we can place the Sephardic Jew, in our effort to understand him?

Not at all. We should remember that the Moors, that the entire Arab caliphate were enlightened people. "Their pen was mightier than their sword." And the Jews who were familiar with Arabic became the intermediaries between the Arabs and the Europeans.

The Jews entered the service of the State. Chasdai Ibn Shaprut of Cordova (tenth century) was a scholar, a scientist (he was a recognized botanist and physician), and a linguist. He became the confidential diplomatic adviser of several succeeding caliphs and fulfilled duties which in modern times would be those of Secretary for Foreign Affairs or Secretary of State, plus Secretary of the Interior or Home Secretary, plus Chancellor of the Exchequer. But he was not only a great statesman and scholar, he was also a great Jew. He became the unofficial Jewish ambassador, so to speak, and he was in constant touch with the far-flung Jewry of the world. In addition, he was a very generous man. He was a Maecenas of education and culture. Hebrew gram-

mar and poetry were hobbies with him, and he constantly sought to exalt and to deepen the faith and culture of the Jew.

Then there was, in Granada, Samuel Ibn Nagdela (993–1056), who by profession was a shopkeeper, by avocation a scholar, and in addition became secretary to the Grand Vizier, in 1027 himself became the Grand Vizier, and developed into a powerful political figure. But as a Jew his status may be defined by the title which he earned from his Jewish contemporaries, by whom he was designated as the "Nagid," or "Prince." A scholar and a patron of scholarship, he aided Jewish culture, compiled a Talmudic manual, wrote a treatise on Hebrew grammar, prepared a psalter for the Synagogue, wrote songs, philosophic essays and even proverbs. When he died, sometime after 1056, his son succeeded him both as Vizier and as "Nagid."

In Saragossa, there were a number of Jews who were viziers, and in Seville, the rabbi was both court astronomer and court astrologer. In Lucena, Rabbi Isaac Alfasi (1013–1103), who compiled a most famous digest of Talmudic law, lived and served his Jewish community although not in the secular sense in which the above-named did.

About the year 1021, there was born in Malaga one who was named Solomon Ibn Gabirol. As he grew up he demonstrated that he was endowed with what many considered a unique and most original mind

for those days. He was primarily a poet, and many of his works are included in the Synagogue's ritual in the form of Piyyutim (liturgical poems). But he was also a philosopher of great distinction. His work "Fons Vitae," which represents an attempt at harmonizing Greek with Oriental philosophy, exercised great influence over Christian thought in the Middle Ages. He was also a moralist of distinction and his "The Improvement of Moral Qualities" and "Choice of Pearls," are worth the attention of moderns. He died in 1069.

There was Ibn Gabirol's contemporary, Bachya Ibn Pakuda, who was a moral philosopher, and his book, "The Duties of the Hearts," continues popular in Jewish life to this day.

There was Jehudah Halevi, who was born at Toledo in 1086. He was the greatest Jewish poet of the Middle Ages, and one of the great poets of mankind. But he was not alone a poet. He was a philosopher as well, and in his work, "The Kuzzari," he discusses the relative merits of the three great monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism.

There were others during this Golden Age of Jewry: Ibn Daud (1110-1180), scientist, philosopher and historian; Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167), critic, poet and philosopher; Moses Ibn Ezra, the poet; Benjamin of Tudela, the explorer, who in days of difficult travel, went in quest of the lost ten

tribes of Israel, and left precious notes of his travels in Europe, Asia and Africa; and, of course, the greatest mind of them all, Moses Maimonides, who died in 1204. He was a scientist and a great physician (he was invited by Richard the Lion-Hearted to become his personal physician when Richard started on the Crusade). He was great not only professionally; he was an acknowledged leader of Jewry and has written prolifically in the field of Jewish philosophy and law. He compiled the "Mishneh Torah," which was an attempt at classifying logically the conglomerate mass of material found in the Talmud. He wrote the "Book of Commandments," in which he attempted to give reasons in explanation of the various commandments enjoined upon Jews. His greatest work was "The Guide to the Perplexed," an attempt at a presentation of Jewish philosophy and a harmonization of that philosophy with the Aristotelian point of view.

Following Maimonides there was Nachmanides, born in 1194, who was a great commentator as well as a mystic, but above all a great debater in disputations which the Church was wont to force upon the Jews of that time.

It was during this period and among the Spanish Jews that the Kabbalah, the mystic lore of Jewry, developed and had its growth. It was here and under these auspices that *The Zohar*, the textbook of the Kabbalah was largely compiled. And it was from

this source that the far-reaching effects of Kabbalism—for good and evil—derived among Jewries of other lands and influenced even the Christian world.

In the fourteenth century we find the name of Chasdai Crescas (1340–1410). Crescas was Rabbi at Saragossa, and had high and important political contacts, standing in the favor of both the King and Queen of Navarre. Crescas was a famed Talmudist and in his well-known work, “The Light of the Lord,” he wrote the introduction to what he hoped might become a code of Jewish religious law, its intention being to offset the Maimonidean system and to expose “the logical inadequacies of the entire system” of Aristotelian philosophy. The code was never written but the introduction, which is “The Light of the Lord,” represents a significant criticism of his predecessor.

A pupil of Crescas who should be mentioned in this connection was Joseph Albo, who in 1428 completed his fine work called “Ikkarim” or “The Book of Principles,” a treatise on Dogmas of Judaism, a book which has been very popular amongst Jews ever since.

And so one could go on and mention name after name and spirit after spirit, of men who wrought greatly and influenced mightily the trend of Jewish thought, but for our purpose enough was indicated however sketchily to suggest the indebtedness of world Jewry to the Spanish period.

To be sure, not all was golden during the Golden Age. But in the crucible of time the dross was eliminated and the gold retained, and though under the Christian influences of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries the period of the cultural decline set in, when Spanish Jewry preserved for itself merely an external veneer of pride, of refinement of manners, of wealth and luxury—the fact remains that the spiritual and intellectual food produced in the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry has continued to nourish world Jewry ever since.

And while we think of the end of the fifteenth century and the expulsion from Spain, we must, perforce, think also of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Whether Columbus was a Jew or not is a debatable matter, but certain it is that Columbus' journey could not have been effected without the help and aid of Jews, or those who had been Jews. And so it is certain that Luis De Santangel, who was a Marano, or Crypto-Jew, whilst he was Chancellor of the Royal household and Controller General of Aragon, helped him very materially.

It is interesting to note also that amongst Columbus' companions on the journey were Alonso De LaCalle, Rodrige Sanchez, Bernal, who was the chief physician, and Marco, who acted as surgeon, and also Luis De Torres, who, as the interpreter of the expedition, was the first white man to put his

foot upon the soil of the Western Hemisphere. All of these were Jews.

Likewise there is no doubt that the money from the Royal Treasury provided for the Columbus expedition was taken from the confiscated Jewish fortunes of the period. Thus Columbus' expedition and the discovery of America, on its financial side no less than on its scientific side, through the use of maps and instruments designed by Jews or crypto-Jews, was made possible in a very large measure by Spanish Jewry.

Contemporary with the period of Jewish domicile in Spain was that of Jews in Portugal. So far as is known there were no persecutions of Jews in this country prior to the thirteenth century when churchly hostility became powerful. In fact, Jews prospered under the benevolent reigns of the early Kings of Portugal. And even after the Church began to make its anti-Jewishness felt, the Kings of Portugal refused to surrender the Jews to the cruel policy of the ecclesiastical authorities. King Alfonso III (1246-1279) even established the civil and religious autonomy of the Jews under the Chief Rabbi, who was an officer of the crown, and Jews occupied important government posts close to the King.

In the fourteenth century the Church succeeded in changing the favor of the Portuguese Kings to ill-will, and active persecution began. This persecution

was intermittent, however, until the reign of Manuel the Great (1495-1521) when the influence of the sovereigns of Spain forced the expulsions and conversions of Jews.

But, the long period of prosperity and protection did produce a number of great Jewish names, such as Don Joseph Ibn Yachya, financier; Don Moses Navarro, Chief Rabbi and physician to the King; Don Isaac Abravanel, minister of finance, scholar and author; Abraham Zacuto, astronomer.

And we must remember this also. Even after 1492, when the Jews were expelled from Spain, we find the name of Menasseh ben Israel, he who successfully petitioned Cromwell of England to permit the return of Jews to England. We have the names of Uriel d'Acosta, of Baruch Spinoza, great names, each of these, the scions of the same stock which created the Golden Age, even as later when the Sephardim were translated to America we have in Judah Touro, the patriot and philanthropist; in Rebecca Gratz; in Mordecai Manuel Noah, the many-sided realist and dreamer; in Judah P. Benjamin, jurist and statesman; in Emma Lazarus, the sweet singer; in Sabato Morais, the founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; in Isaac Leeser, who was the first Jew to translate the Bible into English; in Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, honored scientist and erudite Hebrew scholar; Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, Rabbi of the Spanish-Portuguese Syna-

gogue in New York and his gifted successor, Dr. David de Sola Pool; in United States Supreme Court Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo; David Belasco who made theatre-history; and others, a continuity of that great stock.

It is out of this glorious spiritual and cultural background that the first Jews came who settled in this New World. These were the precursors of the later streams of Jewish migration to America, the forerunners of additional stocks. What these others had, what their background was, these we shall examine in subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BACKGROUND OF THE GERMAN JEW IN AMERICA

ON the physical side, the background of German Jewry varies not at all from the background of other Jewries.

It seems reasonably certain that Jews entered what is known as "Germany" with the Roman legions. A few came as soldiers, more came as traders. First-century tombstones found in Mayence seem to refer to Jewish soldiers in the Roman legions. Some terra-cotta bottle-stoppers discovered in Roman ruins along the Rhine, dating from the end of the third century, are made in the form of sculptured caricatures of Jews. In other words, before the Germans crossed the Rhine, there were Jews in Germany.

✓ But the first unquestionable evidence of the presence of Jews in Germany comes from the fourth century. For, in 321, there was in Cologne a well-established and well-organized Jewish community. And this historic evidence begins, characteristically enough, with discrimination. In that year it is Con-

stantine the Great who deprives Jews of Cologne of exemption from service on the town council.

And through all subsequent centuries we get the tale of discrimination, of restriction, of oppression, a tale that is never-varying to any considerable degree. To be sure, we find moments of grace, years of surcease, short periods of ease and comfort. But we must not forget that some of the most dreadful experiences of the Jew in all the ages of his suffering came to him in Germany; that some of the darkest pages of Jewish history were written in Germany.

We must recognize also that some very bright pages of Jewish history were written there, but these only more recently. Were a comprehensive record of the experiences of Jews in Germany to be written, we should have to write a very much longer chapter than we intend to write here. We shall, therefore, only just sketch instead of paint the picture.

In the earliest time, the status of the Jews in Germany was the same as that which Jews had under the Roman Empire. They had some civic liberties greatly restricted, in that Jews were not allowed to disseminate their faith; they were not permitted to keep Christian slaves; they were not allowed to hold office under the government.

Under the Franks, the Burgundians, the Merovingians, and under Charlemagne, the Jewish status continued largely unchanged. To be sure, they were

not considered members of the aristocracy, they were not coddled. They were even denied the right to bear arms, a privilege which was reserved only to "gentlemen." Many enterprises were closed to them and they were consequently forced into such occupations in which no "gentleman" of those days engaged. Thus they perforce came to engage in trade, commerce, and money-lending.

Slowly, however, ecclesiasticism was gaining ground and the Church was becoming increasingly active in its effort to inflame the populace against the Jews. Beginning with the tenth century, Holy Week in the Church became an annual period of massacre and butchery. In the eleventh century the Crusades began, and throughout several centuries thereafter the trail of the Crusades was a trail of blood traced through the Jewish communities of Germany. Whole communities, like Treves, Speyer, Worms, Mayence, Cologne (these last three are the earliest Jewish communities in Germany), Neuss, Ratisbon, Altenahr, Regensburg, Magdeburg, Würtzburg and Halle, also communities throughout Bohemia, were literally and completely wiped out.

Then also came the horrible libel that the Jews required human blood for their ritual. And, again, there came another charge that the Jews desecrated the Host. (The Host is the wafer used in the Communion service which upon being consecrated is

believed to become the body of Jesus.) The charge was that the Jews would pierce these wafers, and that in some mysterious way blood would be flowing out of them. In other words, the charge was that the Jews stabbed the Saviour, and his blood it was that was thus shed. In consequence of these libels hundreds of Jews were killed, thousands were exiled. By the middle of the fourteenth century there came the nightmare of the Black Plague, when the charge was leveled against the Jews that they were responsible for the plague in that, so it was alleged, they poisoned the wells. The result was untold massacre.

In Basle, the Jews were imprisoned and the building in which they were imprisoned was set on fire. In Freiburg, they were burned at the stake. In Speyer, they anticipated their butchery by self-destruction. In Strausburg, two thousand Jews were roasted alive in their own cemetery. In Worms, Oppenheim, and Frankfort they set their own homes on fire. In Mayence, the Jewish community of five thousand souls was completely destroyed. In Erfut, three thousand Jews were killed. And so on and on the story is continued. It is said, that of three hundred and fifty Jewish communities existing in Germany before the holocaust, only three communities of any importance remained.

The kings, ostensibly to protect the Jews, declared them *Kamerknecht*, that is, servants of the king. Actually this meant that they became the per-

sonal chattels of the kings for their personal profit and frequent extortion.

In the fifteenth century the experience of the Crusades was renewed. This was the period of persecution against the Hussites, and the persecution naturally extended itself to all non-believers. And so we have again the Jews of Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, experiencing the terrors of death, of forced baptism, of voluntary immolation.

The Lutheran Reformation came, and for a while it seemed as though some relief would come with it, for, at first, Luther, like Mohammed in his day, was friendly to the Jews. Indeed, he was very flattering to them, for he believed that merely by renouncing the authority of the Papacy and Church, he could win the Jews over to an acceptance of his type of Christianity. When later he discovered that he was mistaken, his friendliness turned into bitter and vindictive hostility. Literary persecutions followed which took the form of public burnings of all copies of the Talmud found in a community, of the making of bonfires out of collections of Rabbinic and other Jewish books.

The story of Jewish life in Germany during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was similar in kind, and is remarkably well depicted in the great novel of Lion Feuchtwanger, called "Power."

During all those dreadful days, what was the cultural, the spiritual state of the Jews in Germany?

To be sure, it was different from the glory that we knew in Spain. In Spain, Jewish philosophy, Jewish thought, Jewish poetry flourished. In Germany, during this period, circumstances were much too bitter. Philosophy needs leisure—it needs a degree of ease. When one is under the flail, rationalism and lucid thinking are not possible. In Germany there were no such stars as we found in the Golden Age in Spain illuminating the intellectual skies and cultural horizon of the Jew. But we find here different fields of Jewish life cultivated. Rabbinic legalism was in great vogue; commentaries on sacred texts multiplied; the responsa (*She'eloth u-Te'shuboth*) of the Rabbis were numerous; the Halakah was diligently pursued. In consequence, in these fields, German Jewry produced some of the great names in Jewish history.

There was Rashi (Rabbi Solomon Yitzchaki, 1040-1105) who, while born in France, studied in Germany, and was a product of the German schools. Rashi was sometimes called "Parshandatha," which means "*The Commentator.*" His outstanding works were the commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud, commentaries that are remarkable. These commentaries became most popular. They were very widely used, and are still being used. In these commentaries Rashi revealed a skill in interpretation, in simplicity, and in brevity, which are quite unusual, and which have made for their great popularity. "Without

Rashi's commentary," say Professors Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, "the Talmud would today be a sealed book." And they add that "ever after [Rashi] the sum of lay education for a Jew consisted in the ability to read his *Hummash* [Pentateuch] with Rashi." In a very striking way, in Rashi we have the point of confluence of the streams of Jewish learning and tendencies of thought.

There was Rabbi Gershom (the eleventh century), who prohibited polygamy, which, while not practiced, was never forbidden in Jewish law, and it might be noted in passing that he antedated the prohibition of polygamy in Christian lands by five centuries, for polygamy did not die out in Christendom until the sixteenth century.

There was Jacob ben Asher (died in 1340), who compiled a code of Jewish practices and laws known as "The Four Rows," which in time became the forerunner of the *Shulhan Aruch*, which to this day is the standard authority on practices and laws amongst orthodox Jews.

Between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries we find the interest shifting to a study of ethics and *Haggadah*, and we have names like Jehudah Hassid, and Rabbi Eleazar of Worms (popularly known as *Rokeach*).

There is a figure that ought not to be neglected in this connection, that of Elijah Levitta (1469-1549). Levitta was born in Bavaria and in time be-

came a romantic figure, in the sense that he became "the link between the Medieval Jewish Grammarians and the Christian Hebraists of the Reformation." He taught many of the churchmen of his day their Hebrew. He lived in the household of churchmen who made it possible for him to carry on his researches in that language. He became the compiler of a gigantic concordance of the Hebrew text of the Bible (which was never published although the manuscript is available), and in his "Introduction to the Masorah," printed in 1538, he brought convincing proof that the vowel points of Hebrew are the creation of the post-Talmudic period.

About the middle of the fourteenth century there was a marked period of decline, so marked that the practice of authoritative teaching had to be introduced. By authoritative teaching it is understood that no one could teach or pass upon Jewish law who did not have license to do so (*Hattarath Hor'a'ah*). It was found essential to fix the order of the services, of ritual, of customs. Asceticism began to thrive, and the Kabbalah, the mystic lore of Jewry, gained a hold and prospered. Cut off from the world the Jews of Germany became a community within a community. No matter what happened outside, piety prevailed, morality was known, purity was the rule, faith abounded, industry and temperance existed. There was, indeed, as someone pointed out, the "beauty of holiness" perceptible

even midst the squalor and dinginess of that environment.

Heine caught the spirit of those days and described it well in his poem "The Princess Sabbath," where he depicted the Jew on the streets outside the Ghetto being treated like a dog, and at times feeling like one, and then on the Sabbath eve as he would return to the Ghetto, his demeanor changed and upon entering his home the miracle of transformation occurred, for lo, the dog was transformed into a man and the man into a prince and, with regal bearing, he sat surrounded by his wife and children, his princess and their princes.

As to secular culture, this was practically unknown amongst German Jews. One product of this period must be noted. It is the development of Yiddish. It is sometimes forgotten that Yiddish is the creation of the German Jew. It is the language that is made up of an inelegant German and many Hebrewisms, or Hebrew expressions. Later, when German Jews settled in Slavonic lands, there was an increment of Slavonic words into the language. During this period there was quite a voluminous literature developed in Yiddish, a literature that was edifying, that was devotional, even belle-letteristic, intended for the common people, although far below the level it attained later among Russian Jews.

The eighteenth century marks a turning point politically and culturally in the life of the Jew in

Germany. The change centers about the personality of Moses Mendelssohn. Moses Mendelssohn's name is the greatest in German Jewry. He was the one who started the process of the adjustment of the Jew to modern life. He began with a translation of the Torah into pure German instead of the jargon which then was Yiddish. He himself was a philosopher of note and paved the way for the Jew's participation in the secular culture and science of Europe. It was his influence that sponsored the establishment of free schools for Jews in Germany, where the language of instruction was German, with the intention that the people might take their place in the general community without embarrassment. Such schools were established in Berlin in 1778, in Breslau in 1792, in Seesen in 1801, in Frankfort-am-Main in 1804, in Wolfenbüttel in 1807.

Under this same influence we have the beginning of a periodical press. The first Jewish magazine ever published was "Hammeasef," which made its appearance in 1783.

In the meantime, the French revolution came and went, and the cry of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, swept the world. The American experiment in democracy was succeeding, and was contributing to the general liberalizing tendency throughout the world. Of this general liberalization the Jews indirectly became the beneficiaries. Political emancipation for the Jews was on its way. It came slowly, but

it came ultimately, when in the nineteenth century complete equality was granted. With this political emancipation there came also an intellectual emancipation, and at once there began the emergence of great names in profusion amongst the Jews of Germany—Gabriel Riesser, Leopold Zunz (who was the founder of the modern scientific method in the study of Judaism), David Cassel, David Friedlander, Zacharias Frankel, Ludwig Philippson, Heinrich Graetz, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Michael Sachs, Moritz Steinschneider, and Naphtali Herz Wessely.

It is during this period also that we have the beginning of the Reform Movement in Judaism—the attempt at adjusting the religious life of the Jew to the needs and requirements of a new day, and in conjunction with this movement we have a group of men emerging whose lives and services are stirring. We mention the names of a few in that galaxy—Abraham Geiger, Samuel Holdheim, Max Lilenthal, Isaac Mayer Wise, Kaufmann Kohler.

We have during this period a development of Jewish scholarship, of intense research on the part of the Jew, a growth of schools, primary schools as well as higher schools of learning, training schools for rabbis, and academies. Preaching is given a new lease of life and a new significance, and the preaching during this period is of a very high quality, indeed. In other words, beginning with Mendelssohn we have a Golden Age of Jewish culture

beginning in Germany, an age of which we today are the beneficiaries and heirs.

Following the fall of Napoleon and the political upheaval in Europe which ensued upon that debacle in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and following also upon the abortive German revolution in the forties of that century, a large migration of all peoples to America, began.

It is then that we have a large influx of German Jews into America. They came in the thirties, the forties, the fifties and later, and when they came they brought with them a yearning for freedom, habits of thrift, a capacity for work, for industry, that were amazing. But unlike the Jews who came before them—the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were wealthy when they came—the German Jews were poor. They came with their packs upon their backs, they peddled, and they struggled, and they starved, but they came at a time when the communities of this country were growing, and the German-Jewish immigrants grew up with their communities. In the process they projected a number of great leaders, men like Isaac Mayer Wise and Kaufmann Kohler (previously referred to), Jacob H. Schiff, Oscar S. Straus and his brother Nathan, Julian W. Mack and Louis D. Brandeis, Louis Marshall and Mayer Sulzberger, Irving and Herbert H. Lehman, people who have enriched and did bless Jewish life in America and elsewhere.

This, then, is the background of the German Jew in America. Again we observe that the colors are black and red. They are the colors of persecution and pillage and massacre. We observe, however, that the order in which the Golden Age came is reversed. In Spain, we noted, it came between the eighth and twelfth centuries and was followed by the period of decline. Amongst the German Jews it was not until after the Emancipation that the Golden Age set in, it was not till then that a very high plane culturally and Jewishly was reached. It is this culture at its highest, and during a period when the search for it was most intense, that German Jews brought with them to America, and this, coupled with their great gifts of organizing and energy, they gave as their contribution to that composite being whom we call "The American Jew."

### CHAPTER III

## THE BACKGROUND OF THE RUSSIAN-POLISH JEWS IN AMERICA

WE come now to the consideration of the background of the Jews of Russia and Poland. Even a bird's-eye view of our people in those countries is enlightening.

There were Jewish communities in what is now known as Russia as early as the year 100 C. E., and according to some historians Jews may have come there even before the Babylonian Captivity in the year 587 B. C. E. We know that during the first centuries of the present era the Jews in Russia had houses of worship. We know also that they had fully developed community organizations. Little else is known of that period except that in the year 300 there is a record of Jews and pagans rising in revolt against the activities of Christian Bishops. We know that at about the eighth century there were considerable numbers of Jews to be found in the Crimea and in the Caucasus.

An interesting and unprecedented event transpired about the year 740. A whole kingdom, known as the Chazars, became converted to Judaism. The

Chazars were racially white, linguistically akin to the Turks and Tartars, a brave and conquering people. Upon their conversion to Judaism, only a professing Jew could reign, and throughout the kingdom Judaism was the established State religion. This lasted until they were finally subdued by the Grand Dukes of Kiev in the year 1016, when they disappeared.

In Kiev during the eleventh and twelfth centuries there was a very prosperous Jewish community which was engaged largely in trading, and in tax farming. They even had some spiritual activity. But the Greek Orthodox Church was in the ascendancy, and as early as in 1113 there was a pogrom in Kiev.

We hear of individual Jews becoming influential in northern Russia, in cities like Novgorod and Moscow, and the impression one gains of that period is that of a growing and developing Jewish life.

But by the sixteenth century, the anti-Jewish policy became firm so that in 1545, during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, extensive persecutions of the Jews and forced baptisms took place. Under Peter the Great, who was generally liberal, that phrase, "Cromye Zhydof" ("except the Jews") began to be used—a very definite restrictive policy being indicated thereby. Catherine the First, his wife and successor, expelled all Jews from Little Russia in 1727, and in 1741 Empress Elizabeth (a daughter of Peter) definitely outlined an anti-Jewish policy and

ordered the immediate expulsion of all Jews—"from our entire empire." In 1762 Catherine the Great, generally considered a liberal, recognized that it was to her advantage to continue the brutal policy of restriction of Jews, and she enforced the restrictive policies of her predecessors.

This brings us to the end of the eighteenth century, the year 1796.

Let us pause here for a moment and turn to Poland. Polish history begins about the middle of the ninth century. There is doubt whether there were any Jews in Poland before the eleventh century, but following the Crusades large numbers of German Jews fled into Poland, which gave them shelter and welcome. The German-Jewish migration into Poland continued during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries—especially during the persecutions that were incident to the Black Plague, the Rindfleisch massacres in 1298, and the Armleder massacres in 1336.

At the end of the fifteenth century, and at the beginning of the sixteenth century, there was an influx of Jews from Bohemia. In the seventeenth century, due to the unrest caused by the Thirty Years' War, there was another large German-Jewish migration into Poland. So that by the end of the eighteenth century (1796), when Poland was partitioned and a part of it ceded to Russia, over one-half of the Jews of the world lived in Poland.

In the early history of the Jews in Poland they enjoyed undisturbed peace and prosperity. They represented the middle class, and they were protected and sheltered by the rulers. But history has a way of repeating itself. By the thirteenth century the Church became influential, and with the growth of that influence the fate and lot of the Jews changed. The seed of race-hatred was implanted, and even against the will and effort of the temporal rulers, the Church proceeded to inflame the populace until, in the fourteenth century, extensive persecutions began. Still, the temporal rulers, for whatever reason, continued to make attempts to protect the Jews. They granted them cultural and religious autonomy, civil rights and some protection. And the Jews became, in consequence, people of influence. They were not only money lenders, they were the capitalists of Poland, the financiers and bankers. They were the farmers of the mint, and coins have been found bearing the names of Polish kings in *Hebrew* letters. They opened up the natural resources of Poland, and they farmed the mines, the salt quarries, the timber. They managed estates. They were the captains of industry. They were merchants, shopkeepers, traders, importers and exporters, handicraftsmen. All of this before the end of the sixteenth century (1572).

But at this point we reach the ascendancy of the Church, which was caused by political quarrels be-

tween the kings and nobles, and the Jews began to suffer.

We have here, as we noted in Germany during this period, the blood ritual charge. We have the Host desecration libel. We have the riots, persecutions, and massacres culminating in the Cossack Uprising in the seventeenth century under Chmielnitzki. (This period of the uprising is admirably described in "Kiddush Hashem" by Sholom Asch.) During this uprising whole communities were wiped out. The estimates of killed vary, some going as high as 675,000. Large numbers of Jews migrated into Western Europe, and in general the effect of those events upon Jewry in Poland and upon Polish history was highly demoralizing, and continued so until the partition of Poland, when the history of Jewry in Russia and the history of the Jews in Poland merge into one stream.

From that point, the end of the eighteenth century, the story of Jewry under the Tzars is a rather well-known tale. It is a tale of disinheritance, of bigotry, of the densest darkness lighted periodically by the flames of Jewish communities burned. Jewish blood flowed freely and unspeakable persecutions existed.

The "Pale of Settlement" restricting the residence of the millions of Jews to a comparatively small strip of territory; the denial to them of the advantages of secular education, of admittance into the profes-

sions; the shame and degradation of the yellow ticket; the rascality of Nicholas the First, Alexander the Third, and Nicholas the Second and Last, names which might be placed by the side of those of Torquemada and Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain,—all these challenge the imagination of normal beings.

When in 1881 massacres began on an organized scale, we had the beginnings of the great migration of Russian and Polish Jews to America, and thereafter, in increasing numbers, they continued to come, through the days of 1904 and 1906 when another epidemic of pogroms broke out, until the days of the World War. By far the greatest Jewish migration to America is represented by those who came from eastern and southeastern Europe.

Here we pause, as we did in the previous chapters, to ask the question: Is this all that we know of these people? Is this their background? Were they merely pariahs, merely outcasts? Let us see.

If ever any group in Jewry during the centuries of exile had any measure of real and spiritual autonomy, that Jewry was found in Russia and Poland! In the truest sense they constituted an *imperium in imperio* (a community within a community). Conditions were such that this autonomy was granted to them, and they utilized it. Talmudic Law was the law, the norm by which life was guided, not

only intellectually but socially. In the sphere of community organization it was the Jews of Poland who perfected the most unique form of community organization Jewish history has ever known. They developed a Congress (*Va'ad Arba Aratzoth*) of the responsible heads and representatives of Jews residing in the four provinces of Galicia, Volhynia, Great Poland and Little Poland, and this Congress had supreme authority and jurisdiction in Jewish life, and definitely curtailed all forms of irresponsibility in the Jewish community. It was this same Jewry that glorified the scholar in Jewish life. It recognized but one form of aristocracy, and that was the aristocracy of learning. Be it said and remembered, Russian-Polish Jewry was, as regards Jewish lore, the most educated Jewry in the long centuries of Jewish history. Schools and academies literally dotted the Jewish communities, and Jewish illiteracy was practically unknown.

It was out of this Jewry also that the sect known as the Chassidim came. This was a group of mystics who rebelled against the literalism of the Rabbis and the general somberness of life and insisted upon a greater joyousness in the worship and service of God. As a movement Chassidism was abortive, but it was most significant, and it still continues to color Jewish life. It was in this Jewry of Russia and Poland also that we had the rise of the *Haskalah* or the Enlightenment Movement. It was here that the Has-

kalah had its greatest vogue, and had its most far-reaching results, and ushered in a revival of Hebrew as a form of literary expression.

It is this Russian-Polish Jewry that gave us the revival of Jewish nationalism, and was largely responsible for modern Zionism. It is this Jewry that contributed largely to the creation and development of a very significant modern Yiddish literature, a literature so markedly worthwhile that no one can fully understand modern Jewish history without a knowledge of Yiddish, as, also, of the Hebrew literature that was developed during this period. It is this Jewry that gave the largest impetus to the development of a periodical Jewish Press. In other words, the Jewry of Russia and Poland was a Jewry that was intellectually avid, mentally alert, culturally eager, ambitious, tireless and persistent. And if, for purposes of comparison with the Jewries which we have previously considered, we seek great names, let us mention some.

There was Solomon Luria (popularly known as *The Maharshal*), the Talmudist; there was Moses Isserles (popularly known as *The Rema*), who was the great commentator on the *Shulhan Aruch*. There was Besht (Israel Baal-Shem-Tob), the great spirit who founded the Chassidim. There was Elijah of Vilna, one of the greatest minds in Jewry. There was Isaac Baer Levenson, who might be called the Mendelssohn of Russia. There was the Baron Joseph

Guensburg, and his son Horace, who were the founders of the Society for the Dissemination of Enlightenment, as they called it. There was Daniel Chwolson, world-renowned Orientalist. There was Abraham Harkavy, foremost scientific scholar. There is Simon Dubnow, one of our greatest modern historians and philosopher of Jewish history. There was Judah Loeb Gordon, the poet of the Haskalah movement. There were Isaac Loeb Perez, Perez Smolenskin, Simeon Frug, Moses Loeb Lilienblum, Judah Steinberg, Abraham Mapu, among the literati.

In Galicia (originally part of Poland) there lived Nachman Krochmal (1785–1849), a lay scholar, who caught the meaning of Jewish history in its philosophic implications, and left a work to posterity which was called "The Guide to the Perplexed of Our Generation," a book of considerable importance and influence. And another Galician Jew to be mentioned in this connection is Rabbi Solomon Judah Loeb Rapoport (1790–1868), who wrote brilliant essays on little-known or forgotten periods of creative activity in Jewish history.

In the nineteenth century (1809–1879) there lived Rabbi Meir Loeb Malbim, whose commentary on the Scriptures gained very considerable popularity, and whose greatness as a Bible student was very real.

There was Chaim Nachman Bialik, generally

recognized as the greatest Jewish poet since Jehudah Halevi. There are Saul Tschernichovsky, the lyricist, and Sholom Asch—the renowned novelist. There was Shalom J. Abramovitz, known as *Mendele Mocher Sefhorim*. There was Shalom Rabinovitz, better known under his pen name *Shalom Aleichem*, who, when visiting America, met Mark Twain, who had read some of the former's writings in English translation, and Mark Twain asked for the privilege of calling himself "the American *Shalom Aleichem*." There was Ahad Ha'am, who was the foremost Jewish philosopher of our generation, and exerted and still exerts the greatest influence upon Jewish thought throughout the world. There was Eliezer Ben-Jehuda (1858-1922) to whom is due in very large measure the revival of Hebrew as a spoken tongue, whose sacrificial and creative life and example, have been the power that rejuvenated the language, and whose Hebrew Thesaurus is an amazing work for one man to have done. There was Nahum Sokolow, amazingly versatile writer, philosopher, statesman. There was Shmarya Levin, preacher, writer, organizer, leader. And there is that great spirit and leader, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the great President of the World Zionist Organization. These names, and the names of others that might be added, give but a superficial idea, may at best reveal only a little bit, of that rich cultural and spiritual background of that Russian

and Polish Jewry which today constitutes, at least quantitatively, the largest ingredient in the making of that being whom today we call "the American Jew."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AMERICAN JEW

WE have traced the background of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who first came to America, of the German Jews, and of the Russian-Polish Jews, who came later. These are not the only Jews who immigrated to America. Others might have been mentioned, because there were Jews who came here from England, from Hungary, from Alsace, from France, from oriental lands, and so on. But these groups never represented a mass migration, and in a certain sense they are really represented in the backgrounds of the others whom we have studied.

Let us repeat now, what was said in the first chapter, that we approach the study of the backgrounds of the various Jewries from the standpoint of seeking the strongest, the best, the finest that may be found there, on the theory that out of goodness, out of what is fine and strong has come that which is good and worth while in American Jewry. And so we found much that was stimulating and inspiring in the experience of our people in those lands whence they migrated to America.

Let us bear in mind also that the Spanish and

Portuguese Jews came to America at a period when culturally and spiritually they were upon the decline. They had passed their Golden Age some centuries before they came to America.

The Germans came here at the very height of a period of revolutionary development and thought.

The Russian and Polish Jews came here also at the very height of a period of revolutionary ferment.

Now, what has each of these groups contributed to American life?

The earliest Jewish communities in America were established, naturally, by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. For a while they were the influential group. But as other groups began to come in and take their respective places in the American communities, the influence of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews began to wane. Why? First, because they were outnumbered. And second, because they assumed an attitude of superiority towards their brethren who were later arrivals. They considered themselves the aristocracy, and refused to associate with the others, refused even to marry with other Jews whose ancestry did not hail from the Iberian Peninsula. It is a well-known fact that many Spanish fathers and mothers would go through the ritual of mourning, actually sitting "shiv'ah," when one of their children married into a German-Jewish family!

There are not many of them left today. Many of

them have assimilated; a great many have gone into the Church; and in some of the congregations founded by them, even though still following the Sephardic ritual, there are very few Spanish and Portuguese Jews left. Their membership is composed largely of German and Russian Jews. Even the Rabbi of one of the oldest of the Sephardic congregations today is a very gifted, American-trained, Galician Jew, just as the pulpits of the erst-while "German" congregations are being manned today by those who derive from East-European lands, either immigrants themselves or the native-born sons of immigrants.

And so to return to the Sephardim. Originally they were few in numbers as compared with those who came after them. Time and circumstances have further decimated their numbers. Those who are left within Jewish life are a fine stock! They recognize, now, that it is only as some of the older pseudo-aristocracy is discarded for frank and free contacts with other Jews, that they can preserve for themselves and for Jewish life some of the values which their fathers brought with them to these shores, and which they themselves so finely represent.

As to the German Jews, they came, as was said previously, at a revolutionary period in Germany. They came here in search of justice, in search of that democracy which is America's finest heritage. And their adjustment to the new life on the new soil,

their enthusiastic participation in the life of America was one of their finest characteristics. They became the builders of American Jewish communities, on a large scale.

More numerous than the older group, they planted the altars of God wherever they went. Numerous congregations came into being. Jewish hospitals were organized, Jewish charities were established. They began to unify the far-flung Jewish communities of America, and in consequence they established the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which in original intent was to have been literally a union of Jewish congregations of all shades of opinion. They organized, established, and maintained the Hebrew Union College for the training of an American-reared and an American-educated rabbinate. They sponsored the Jewish Theological Seminary of America under the guidance at first of that great Italian Jew, Sabato Morais, and later under the leadership of Solomon Schechter, Roumanian born, but Austrian and German trained. They established the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and they did one more thing which is of tremendous significance and importance.

The Spanish-Portuguese Jews, so long as they remained in Jewish life, were strictly orthodox. They were entirely and totally unbending and unyielding. The result was that either they remained within Jewry as interpreted by orthodoxy, or when they

no longer could accept it, they left the fold and entered the Church. The German Jews brought with them the spirit of the Jewish Reformation, and the Reform Movement in America became the preservative of countless numbers who otherwise might have been lost to the Synagogue and to Jewish life.

They, too, like their Sephardic predecessors, developed in time a superior mien toward later Jewish arrivals. They, too, began to lose through the assumption of the attitude of social aristocracy, through loss of contacts with the Jewish masses. And they, too, are discarding pseudo-aristocratic pretensions in an honest and altogether praiseworthy desire and effort to preserve themselves as Jews and to preserve the spiritual and cultural values which they, or their fathers, brought with them to America.

The latest group of Jews coming into our American life were the Russian and Polish Jews. When they came, they, like the Germans, were poor and largely refugees. They threw themselves into the economic and cultural life of America with the same zest and vim which characterized their older brethren.

They are today not only numerically the largest, but actually the most vigorous group in American Jewry. They are just emerging culturally, economically, socially. As a group they are just beginning to find and to assume their place in American life. Their youth is quick, it is ambitious, it is sensible and

gifted, and with remarkable ability and agility they are taking their places in the national life. In political life, in the arts and sciences, in the professions, in industry, and in religion they are surging on to positions of leadership and distinction.

<sup>1</sup> They are the builders of the Conservative wing in the American Synagogue which is rapidly coming to the forefront (with its form of organization modeled, to be sure, after that of the older Reform branch), and they are beginning to occupy a significant part in American life. The Conservative Synagogue, the creation, largely, of this latest migration, represents their adjustment to the needs and claims of American life—even as in an earlier generation the Reform Movement was the outgrowth of the desire for adjustment and adaptation which prompted the German Jews. The building of the great Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary for the training of orthodox Rabbis in America and its Yeshiva College, is also an outgrowth of this grouping and adjustment. The new stress upon the need for an adequate and fuller Jewish education for American Jews, the leadership in this field of endeavor, and indeed the members of the new profession of Jewish Educators, come pre-eminently from this later group. The Zionist Movement in America has been sponsored largely by these, and if, today, Palestine has become the concern of a united American Jewry, it has been the

persistence and idealism and self-sacrificing devotion of the Russian-Polish Jew that has maintained the work through these many lean years.

The Rabbinate of America, Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, is gaining tremendous additions of strength from the children of this last migration, and, in general, one has but to read through the volumes of "Who's Who In American Jewry" to be amazed at the tale of achievement and service recorded in its pages—a record of service being rendered by the Russian-Polish Jews who came to America.

We do not mean to say that the Russian Jew is in any sense superior to the others. We do not mean to convey the idea that he is unlike the others. But we do mean to stress this fact—that he is the newer arrival in America—the more youthful member of the American-Jewish household, and where the others had reached a height of usefulness before, he is now approaching that elevation.

And let us not fail to notice this, also. There was a time when leadership in the Jewish communities in America was vested in the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. Later that leadership passed over to the German Jews. Today, *by the side of the others*, in increasing numbers, in growing influence and usefulness, we find the Russian and Polish Jews. There is a breaking down of the social barriers between these groups, intermarriage between all three of them is

considerable, until it is very clearly evident now, that out of these various groups, as a result of these various factors, because of the new life and the common life which Jews in America are living, a new personality is emerging. Not any longer the Spanish-Portuguese Jew in America; not the German Jew in America; not the Russian-Polish Jew in America; but the *American Jew*.

Thus when we speak of the *American Jew*, we no longer speak of any one of these. The "melting pot" theory which in general American life failed, within American Jewry has worked and still works successfully. All the groups are becoming blended, a synthesis is created of all, and these, in their common life in America, their common hopes, and common achievements, represent what alone we might call and designate—the *American Jew!* He is the Jew in America who, regardless of the geographic origins of his fathers, takes his place in the American community and occupies it with dignity and worth and self-respect, living honorably and usefully as a Jew and as an American. A human being keenly patriotic, splendidly advancing, finely contributing, nobly aggressive, culturally creative, socially-minded and progressive; a composite personality, made up of the best of the centuries of creative endeavor and spiritual groping of *world Jewry*, striking his roots into the congenial and blessed soil of America—that is the *American Jew!*



CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES  
AND  
READING LISTS



## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES

### CHAPTER I

#### *THE SPANISH-PORTUGUESE JEWS*

##### YEAR

- 69-79—Roman Emperor Vespasian exiles some Jews to Spain.  
117-138—Roman Emperor Hadrian (himself a Spaniard) exiles some Jews to Spain.  
313—Church Council of Elvira.  
409—Vandals invade Spain.  
412—Visigoths invade Spain.  
589—Third Church Council of Toledo.  
—Reccared I converted to Christianity, and Catholicism becomes State Religion. Persecutions of Jews in Spain begin.  
638—Sixth Church Council of Toledo restricts residence in Spain only to Catholics.  
687-701—Jewish religion proscribed in Spain.  
693—Jews forbidden to hold real estate.  
711—Arab invasion.  
912-961—Chasdai ibn Shaprut  
993-1056—Samuel ibn Nagdela ha-Nagid  
1013-1103—Isaac Alfasi  
1021-1069—Solomon ibn Gabirol  
1050-?—Bachya ibn Pakuda  
1070-1139—Moses ibn Ezra  
1086-1140—Jehudah Halevi  
1092-1167—Abraham ibn Ezra  
1110-1180—Abraham ibn Daud  
1120-1190—Judah ibn Tibbon

- 1135-1204—Moses Maimonides  
 1160-1239—Samuel ibn Tibbon  
 1165-1173—Travels of Benjamin of Tudela.  
 1194-1270—Moses Nachmanides  
 1340-1410—Chasdai Crescas  
 1348—The Black Plague.  
 1428—Joseph Albo completes his “Ikkarim” (“Book of Principles”).  
 1427-1509—Isaac Abravanel  
 1480—Jewish printing presses established in Spain.  
     —The Inquisition is established.  
 1483—Torquemada appointed Grand Inquisitor.  
 1492—Jews expelled from Spain.  
     —Columbus discovers America.  
 1496—Jews expelled from Portugal.  
 1654—Jews arrive in New Amsterdam.  
 1658—Jews settle at Newport, Rhode Island.  
 1730—First public Synagogue (Sephardic) established in New York.

## CHAPTER II

*THE GERMAN JEWS*

- First Centuries—Jews enter Germany with Roman conquerors.  
 321—There is a well-established Jewish community in Cologne.  
 960-1040—Rabbi Gershom of Mayence  
 1012—Jews expelled from Mayence.  
 1034—Synagogue erected in Worms.  
 1040-1105—Rabbi Solomon Yitzchaki (Rashi)  
 1096—First Crusade. Massacres.  
 1146—Second Crusade.  
 1189—Third Crusade.  
 1215—The Fourth Lateran Church Council.

- 1217—Death of Jehudah Hassid.  
 1220—1293—Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg  
 1238—Death of Eleazar of Worms (Rokeach).  
 1298—Rindfleisch persecutions.  
 1336—Armleder uprising.  
 1340—Jacob ben Asher died.  
 1348—The Black Plague.  
     —German Jews emigrate to Poland.  
 1356—The “Golden Bull.”  
 1419—1436—Hussite Wars.  
 1469—1549—Elijah Levitta  
 1510—1520—Pfefferkorn-Reuchlin controversy.  
 1517—Lutheran Reformation.  
 1618—1648—Thirty Years’ War.  
 1690—1764—Jonathan Eybeschuetz  
 1697—1776—Jacob Emden  
 1704—1762—David Fraenkel  
 1711—Eisenmenger’s “Judaism Unmasked” republished.  
 1712—First public synagogue in Berlin.  
 1714—Death of Glueckel of Hameln.  
 1725—1805—Naphtali Herz Wessely  
 1729—1786—Moses Mendelssohn  
 1743—1812—Mayer Anshel Rothschild  
 1750—1834—David Friedlander  
 1768—1828—Israel Jacobsohn, founder of Reform Movement.  
 1783—“Hammeasef”—first Hebrew periodical—appears.  
 1793—1860—Isaac Marcus Jost  
 1794—1866—Leopold Zunz  
 1797—1856—Heinrich Heine  
 1797—Some disabilities removed.  
 1801—Beginnings of Reform (cf. Israel Jacobsohn).  
 1801—1875—Zacharias Frankel  
 1806—1860—Samuel Holdheim  
 1806—1863—Gabriel Riesser  
 1808—Jews of Westphalia given full citizenship.  
 1808—1864—Michael Sachs  
 1809—1879—David Einhorn

- 1810-1874—Abraham Geiger  
 1811—Disabilities removed in Frankfort.  
 1811-1889—Ludwig Philippson  
 1812—Emancipation of Jews in Prussia.  
 1812-1875—Moses Hess  
 1813—Jews of Mecklenburg emancipated.  
 1815-1882—Max Lilienthal  
 1816-1907—Moritz Steinschneider  
 1817-1891—Heinrich Graetz  
 1818—Hamburg Temple dedicated.  
 1818-1893—David Cassel  
 1819-1900—Isaac Mayer Wise  
 1830—Large Jewish migration from Germany to America.  
 1833—Jews emancipated in Hesse.  
 1843—Order B'nai Brith founded in America.  
 1843-1923—Mayer Sulzberger  
 1843-1926—Kaufmann Kohler  
 1847-1920—Jacob H. Schiff  
 1848—Another large German-Jewish migration to the United States.  
     —Full emancipation granted to Jews of Germany.  
 1873—Union of American Hebrew Congregations founded.  
 1875—Hebrew Union College opened in Cincinnati.  
 1886—Jewish Theological Seminary of America founded.  
 1888—Jewish Publication Society of America organized.  
 1889—Central Conference of American Rabbis organized.

### CHAPTER III

#### *THE RUSSIAN-POLISH JEWS*

- 100—Jewish communities exist in southern Russia.  
 740—Conversion of Chazar Kingdom.  
 989—Christianity becomes State Religion of Russia.  
 1016—End of Chazar Kingdom.  
 1113—Pogrom in Kiev.

- 1240—Tartar conquest.  
 1264—Boleslav the Pious gives charter (Poland).  
 1333—1370—Reign of Casimir the Great (Poland).  
 1420—Church Council of Kalisz (Poland) re-enacts anti-Jewish laws.  
 1447—Casimir IV, King of Poland.  
 1455—Riots against Jews of Cracow (Poland).  
 1468—Riots against Jews of Posen (Poland).  
 1495—Jews expelled from Lithuania (Poland).  
 1506—?—Jews return to Lithuania (Poland).  
 1510—1573—Solomon Luria (Poland)  
 1530—1572—Moses Isserles (Poland)  
 1551—Royal “Great Charter” under Sigismund Augustus (Poland).  
 1554—1616—Meir of Lublin (Poland)  
 1564—1566—Polish King forbids “ritual murder” charge.  
 1635—1636—Cossack uprisings (Poland).  
 1648—1649—Chmielnitzki Massacres.  
 1650—Council or Congress of Four Lands meets (Poland).  
 1700—1760—Israel Baal-Shem-Tob (Besht) founder of Chasidism (Poland).  
 1720—1797—Elijah, Gaon of Vilna (Poland).  
 1762—1796—Reign of Catherine II.  
 1764—Council or Congress of Four Lands abolished (Poland).  
 1772—First Partition of Poland.  
 1785—1849—Nachman Krochmal  
 1788—1860—Isaac Baer Levenson  
 1790—1868—Solomon Judah Loeb Rapoport  
 1793—Second Partition of Poland.  
 1795—Third Partition of Poland.  
 1803—Yeshivah at Volozhin established.  
 1804—“Pale of Jewish Settlement” established.  
 1808—1867—Abraham Mapu  
 1809—1879—Meir Loeb Malbim  
 1812—Napoleon at Moscow.  
 —Polish constitution omits Jewish Rights.

- 1812-1878—Baron Joseph Guenzburg  
1819-1911—Daniel Chwolson  
1821-1891—Leo Pinsker  
1822—Imperial edict abolishes Kahals, Jewish Communal Organizations in Poland.  
1824—Jews expelled from villages.  
1825-1855—Reign of Nicholas I.  
1827—Jewish “Cantonists.”  
1830—Revolution in Poland.  
1831-1892—Judah Loeb Gordon  
1833-1909—Baron Horace Guenzburg  
1836-1917—Shalom J. Abramovitz (*Mendele Mocher Sforim*)  
1839-1910—Abraham Harkavy  
1840-1845—Max Lilienthal in Russia.  
1842-1885—Perez Smolenskin  
1843-1910—Moses Loeb Lilienblum  
1846—Sir Moses Montefiore in Russia.  
1851-1915—Isaac Loeb Perez  
1853-1856—Crimean War.  
1855-1881—Reign of Alexander II.  
1856-1927—Asher Ginzberg (*Abad Ha'am*)  
1858-1922—Eliezer Ben-Jehuda  
1859-1916—Shalom Rabinovitz (*Shalom Aleichem*)  
1860—Simon Dubnow born.  
1860-1936—Nahum Sokolow  
1863—Polish Revolution.  
1873-1934—Chaim Nachman Bialik  
1874—Chaim Weizmann born.  
1877-1878—Russo-Turkish War.  
1881-1894—Reign of Alexander III.  
1881—Wave of pogroms. Mass migration of Russian Jews to America begins.  
1882—More pogroms. “May Laws” enacted.  
—Pinsker’s “Auto-Emancipation” appears.  
1887—Independent Order of Brith Abraham founded in America.

- 1891—Jews expelled from Moscow.  
 1894—Reign of Nicholas II begins.  
 1896—Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Yeshivah organized in New York.  
 1898—Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America founded.  
 1901—Rabbincal Assembly of America founded.  
 1902—Union of Orthodox Rabbis of United States and Canada organized.  
 1903—Russo-Japanese War.  
   —Massacres at Kishineff, etc.  
 1905—Mass exodus of Jews from Russia begins.  
   —Russian Revolution.  
 1913—The United Synagogue of America founded.  
 1921—Hebrew Theological College founded in Chicago.  
 1928—Yeshiva College founded in New York.

## CHAPTER IV

*THE AMERICAN JEW*

- 1492—Columbus discovered America.  
 1654—Jews arrive in New Amsterdam.  
 1658—Jews settle in Newport, R. I.  
 1722-1764—Judah Monis instructor at Harvard.  
 1727—Jews naturalized in New York.  
 1730—First Public Synagogue (Sephardic) established in New York.  
 1733—Jews arrive in Georgia.  
 1740—Jews naturalized in America.  
 1740-1785—Haym Salomon  
 1741—Jews in Charleston, S. C.  
 1745-1816—Gershon Mendes Seixas  
 1776—Declaration of Independence.  
 1776-1854—Judah Touro  
 1781-1869—Rebecca Gratz

- 1785-1851—Mordecai Manuel Noah  
1787—United States Constitution removes religious test from requirements for public office.  
1806-1868—Isaac Leeser  
1809-1879—David Einhorn  
1811-1884—Judah P. Benjamin  
1815-1882—Max Lilienthal  
1819-1900—Isaac Mayer Wise  
1823-1897—Sabato Morais  
1824—Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston, S. C.  
1830—Jewish migration from Germany to the U. S.  
1838—First Jewish Sunday School founded in America.  
1839—First Polish-Jewish Congregation in America formed.  
1843—Order B'nai Brith formed.  
1843-1923—Mayer Sulzberger  
1843-1926—Kaufmann Kohler  
1848—Influx of German Jews to America.  
1849-1887—Emma Lazarus  
1850-1915—Solomon Schechter  
1850-1926—Oscar S. Straus  
1852—First Congregation of Russian Jews founded in New York.  
1854—"The American Israelite" founded. The oldest Anglo-Jewish periodical in the country.  
1856—Louis D. Brandeis born.  
1856-1929—Louis Marshall  
1861-1865—Civil War in the United States.  
1863—Cyrus Adler born.  
1866—Julian W. Mack born.  
1867—Maimonides College in Philadelphia, the first Jewish college in America. Closed in 1873.  
1870—The first Yiddish newspaper in America, "Die Post," founded in New York.  
—Benjamin N. Cardozo born.  
1873—Union of American Hebrew Congregations founded.  
1874—Stephen S. Wise born.  
1875—Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati opened.

- 1885—Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference.
- 1886—Jewish Theological Seminary of America opened in New York.
- 1888—Jewish Publication Society of America organized.  
—Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America (HIAS) organized.
- 1889—Central Conference of American Rabbis organized.
- 1890—Immigration restricted.
- 1891—Baron de Hirsch Fund established.
- 1892—American Jewish Historical Society founded.
- 1893—Jewish Chautauqua Society organized.  
—National Council of Jewish Women organized.
- 1896—Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York organized.  
—National Farm School in Doylestown, Pa., organized.
- 1897—Zionist Organization of America organized.
- 1899—National Conference of Jewish Social Service organized.
- 1900—Jewish Agricultural Society organized.  
—“Der Arbeiter Ring” (The Workmen’s Circle) organized.
- 1901—Rabbinical Assembly of America constituted.
- 1902—1915—Solomon Schechter, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
- 1903—1921—Kaufmann Kohler, President of the Hebrew Union College.
- 1905—“The Jewish Encyclopedia” completed.  
—Celebration of 250th anniversary of Jewish settlement in North America.
- 1906—The American Jewish Committee organized.
- 1908—Dropsie College in Philadelphia opened.
- 1913—Treaty of Commerce with Russia (1832) abrogated by the United States Government because of Russian discrimination against American Jews.  
—President Taft vetoes immigration-restriction bill.
- 1914—President Wilson vetoes immigration-restriction bill.  
—Joint Distribution Committee organized.

- 1917—American Jewish Congress organized.  
—Jewish Welfare Board organized.  
—New English translation of Scriptures published.  
—The United States declares war on Germany.
- 1920—Jewish War Veterans of the U. S. organized.  
—American Academy for Jewish Research organized.
- 1922—The Jewish Institute of Religion organized.
- 1923—Rabbinical Council of America (orthodox) constituted.
- 1924—The Johnson-Lodge bill for restriction of Immigration signed by President Coolidge.  
—National Council for Jewish Education organized.
- 1925—Graduate School for Jewish Social Work organized.  
—Synagogue Council of America organized.
- 1926—Jewish Academy of Arts and Sciences organized.
- 1928—Yeshiva College opened in New York.
- 1929—Union of Sephardic Congregations organized.
- 1932—Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds organized.

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(Only such works are listed here as are available in English)

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